



**Maryland Developmental
Disabilities Council**

CREATING CHANGE · IMPROVING LIVES

**Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
SB411: Department of Veterans Affairs – Renaming and Deputy Secretary of
Military Family Policy and Programs
February 8, 2024
Position: Support**

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (DD Council) is an independent, public policy organization that creates changes to make it possible for people with developmental disabilities to live the lives they want with the support they need. We focus on children and adults with developmental disabilities and their families, including military families.

WHAT does this legislation do?

- Renames the Department of Veterans Affairs to the Department of Veterans and Military Families.
- Requires the Secretary to appoint a Deputy Secretary of Military Family Policy and Programs.

WHY is this important?

- **There are over 60,000 active duty, National Guard, and reserve members in Maryland.**
- **Those active duty, National Guard, and reserve members have over 45,000 children.ⁱ**
- The CDC estimates that nearly 9% of children ages 3-17 years old has one or more developmental disability.ⁱⁱ In Maryland, that possibly means about **5,400 of the children of active duty, National Guard, and reserve members of the military have a developmental disability.**
- At least one study of the effects of military deployment on children suggests that **there is a relationship between parent deployment and adverse risk for developmental delays and disabilities in children.ⁱⁱⁱ**
- The sooner, and more often families get the information, resources, and services and support they need and want, the more likely they are to live and thrive in Maryland.

The Need to Focus on Military Families

- Our work includes outreach and connections to groups related to our priorities and mission, such supporting families of people with developmental disabilities. That led us to partner with the Department of Veterans Affairs in a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).
- We are collaborating because **military families of children and adults with developmental disabilities have unique needs.** We will learn from military families and veteran families who have family members with a developmental disability about what they need and want.
- We are also collaborating because **information and resources are available, but not targeted to military and veteran families.** We will develop information and resources based on what we learn from this community to build and share a toolkit about the services and supports available to people with developmental disabilities of all ages

Refocusing the Department to veterans **and** military families, as well as establishing a high-level position focuses on the policies and programs that impact their lives, and strengthens the commitment to those families. **For these reasons, the Council supports SB 411, and looks forward to our continued**

partnership to make sure state systems welcome, value, and support military families who have family members with developmental disabilities.

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ⁱ December 2022, Military State Policy Source. <<https://statepolicy.militaryonesource.mil/state/MD>>

ⁱⁱ July 2023, NCHS Data Brief No. 473 < <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db473.pdf>>

ⁱⁱⁱ Nguyen, et al. The Effects of Military Deployment on Early Childhood Development. The US Army Medical Department Journal. Oct-Dec 2014, pgs. 81-86.